

Montrose County

Local Planning Summary

Prepared for the:
**Dixie, Fishlake & Manti-La Sal National Forests
Forest Plan Revision
Social and Economic Assessment**



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MONTROSE COUNTY MASTER PLAN, 2001

Summary & Key Issues	Montrose County is a largely undeveloped area of Colorado. The majority of private lands are used for agriculture, and wildlife-related activities make a significant contribution to the local economy. The County's mining sector has experienced a boom-bust cycle, and has recently experienced growth in its government and service sectors. The Plan doesn't make specific mention of what is contributing to this growth, but it is not directly tied to a significant commercial / industrial development. The County is concerned about the increasing pressures on historic Tribal sites and objects. The Plan makes reference to the Uncompahgre National Forest, but not the Manti-La Sal.
Historical Abstract	"In recent years, the range of interests competing for use of public lands in the West has changed. To some extent, traditional user groups, such as mining, livestock, and timber concerns, are feeling the effects of increasing pressure to manage the land for recreation, hunting, and environmental uses. Traditional alliances between public land managers and historic users of the public lands are showing signs of stress as a case continues to be made for more use, or no use, on the public lands. As competition for public resources increases, the pressure to balance various uses and interests is growing", (p.7).
Economic Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Agriculture uses approximately 92% of the private lands in the County", (p.8).• In 1997, the economic value of wildlife-related activities was estimated to be >\$24,000,000 (p.44).<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ This constitutes a considerable contribution to the County.• The County's mining sector has experienced a boom-bust cycle with uranium, but still extracts sand, gravel, coal, natural gas, and oil, (p.46).

Environmental Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gunnison Basin has soluble selenium concentrations that are 34-times higher than in un-irrigated residual soils, than in historically irrigated alluvial soils, (p.34-35). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ High concentrations of selenium can be toxic. • One of the greatest threats to wildlife habitat and rangeland resource is the rapid invasion of competitive and invasive weeds that drive out the desirable native vegetation, (p.44). • Average annual precipitation is between 7-9 inches, and crops require irrigation, (p.52).
Social & Cultural Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Historically, wildlife has been a treasured resource of the County due to its economic and recreational values”, (p.44).
Tribal-Specific Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Of immediate concern is the preservation of Native American rock art”, (p.51). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ There are plentiful and wide-ranging prehistoric, as well as historic, sites and objects associated with both the Utes and early pioneer settlers. ◦ “Growth is now imperiling many of these resources.”
Forest-Specific Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Plan makes frequent mention of the Uncompahgre National Forest, but not the Manti LaSal, (p.28). • The Forest Service is currently developing a fire plan for the Gunnison / Uncompahgre / Grand Mesa National Forests, (p.65).
Public Lands Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The economy of the region has been tied to public lands for well over one hundred years”, (p.7). • Nearly 70% of the land area is in public ownership, (p.8). • The Plan identifies recreational trail connections in the western part of the County, (p.60).
Regional Demographic Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most land outside of the incorporated areas of the County is zoned General Agricultural, (p.13). • Between 1990-2000, the County’s population grew by 37%, (p.22). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The previous decade’s rate was only 1% (no clear reason identified in the Plan). ◦ The government and service sectors have grown significantly.

RPI CONSULTING, MONTROSE CO. DEVELOPMENT IMPACT ANALYSIS, 2002
&
MONTROSE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, (Website 2003)
&
MONTROSE VISITORS AND CONVENTION BUREAU, (Website 2003)

Summary & Key Issues	Montrose, Colorado is home to the Black Canyon National Park situated in the scenic Uncompahgre Valley of southwestern Colorado. Tourism is encouraged. The County has witnessed a significant in-migration over the past decade, and this is expected to continue. The County is aggressively pursuing economic development of clean engineering / manufacturing industries. The County is also struggling to provide services under their current tax / revenue program.
Historical Abstract	In 2002, the County conducted an impact analysis of projected growth on the ability of the County to provide services. The analysis concludes that County residents will have to choose between either increasing County tax revenues or significantly reducing the level of services provided. The most significant shortfall will be in roadway maintenance.
Economic Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Montrose boasts a business spirit as bold as the Rocky Mountains. In 2000 Montrose was named the Small Community of the Year by Colorado's economic developers. For the 8th year in a row, Colorado has received straight A's from the Corporation for Enterprise Development. Montrose's thriving business community has attracted companies in aerospace, micromachining and composites. Future targets include companies in fuel cell and water conservation technologies. The Montrose EDC is a founding partner in Colorado's Space Strategy, a new alliance to retain and attract space- and aerospace-related businesses”, (econ devt - web).
Forest-Specific Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Montrose County (Uncompahgre National Forest) offers spectacular drives, rich in beauty and variety, attracting more than a million visitors a year, (visitor-web).

**Regional
Demographic
Issues**

- Population in the city of Montrose is approximately 13,000 and the metropolitan area (a 10 mile radius) has a population of 30,000. Montrose, Colorado, is also the home of the Black Canyon National Park, (visitor-web).
- “Montrose experienced strong population growth in the 1990's. According to the State of Colorado, Montrose grew 36.6% over the past decade, and the population is expected to grow another 25.5% by 2010. Checks of vehicle registrations show that people are moving to Montrose from all 50 states,” (econ devt -web).